PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

11-12

PLAN FOR 2011-12

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

MINISTRY PLAN FOR 2011-12

Statement from the Minister

I am pleased to present the Ministry of Environment's Plan for 2011-12 which identifies strategies and actions that are aligned with Government's direction and my **2010 Mandate Letter** from Premier Wall.

The Ministry of Environment is committed to providing public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

As the province continues to experience tremendous economic activity and population growth, this Ministry's contribution to our *Saskatchewan Advantage* also grows.

We continue to implement a new results-based environmental model that is a more collaborative regulatory approach to achieving desired environmental outcomes. We are working with developers, licensees and citizens on finding the most appropriate methods and processes to achieve those outcomes.

Increased opportunities for innovative environmental stewardship and risk-based decision making are vital in a growing province. That is why we are improving tools and services that will result in more transparency and accountability in the proactive management of our environment.

Saskatchewan's Advantage includes many natural resources that are valuable commodities. It also includes natural resources that are priceless such as clean water, fresh air and a natural landscape that sustains aquatic life and wildlife.

I accept responsibility for furthering Government's commitments, values and principles while ensuring the Ministry of Environment is managed with integrity and professionalism.

The progress this Ministry makes will be in keeping with the Plan and reported on in the Ministry's annual report.

The Honourable Dustin Duncan
Minister of Environment

Response to Government Direction

Government's plan for the upcoming year is described in the *Government Direction for 2011-12: The Saskatchewan Advantage*. The 2011-12 Budget supports this plan by maintaining and improving our quality of life through enhanced public services and creating more opportunities for all Saskatchewan citizens. Responsible fiscal management means finding the right balance between debt reduction, tax relief, investing in short-term capital infrastructure projects, and matching program spending to long-term, sustainable revenues.

Meanwhile, Government continues to promote effectiveness and efficiency throughout the public service; is continuing with its four-year plan to reduce Government's footprint; and has adopted a "Lean" culture of continuous improvement in the delivery of programs and services.

Ministry Plans for 2011-12 support the fulfillment of Government's **vision for a secure and prosperous Saskatchewan, leading the country in economic and population growth, while providing opportunity for a high quality of life for all**. Government's goals and priorities for the upcoming year are described in the *Government Direction* document, as well as in each ministry plan.

The Plan for 2011-12 communicates a high-level framework for the Ministry's key activities in the upcoming year. All ministries and agencies will report on results achieved or not yet achieved, in their annual reports, to honour Government's commitment to keep its promises, and to ensure greater transparency and accountability to Saskatchewan people.

Mission Statement

The Ministry of Environment provides public service excellence in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of natural resources to enhance economic and social benefits.

Strategies and Actions

Government Goal – Economic Growth

Sustain **Economic Growth** for the benefit of Saskatchewan people, ensuring the economy is ready for growth and positioning Saskatchewan to meet the challenges of economic and population growth and development.

Strategy	Key 2011-12 Actions
Deliver effective results-based environmental regulation	• Continue to implement program changes required by proclamation of *The Environmental Assessment Act, The Forest Resources Management Act* and *The Environmental Management and Protection Act.* • Continue consultations with targeted stakeholder groups such as business organizations, academics, environmental non-government organizations, municipal and industry representatives and with First Nations, on legislative amendments and development of the Environmental Code. • Continue to implement new divisional and branch organizational structures including the Client Service Office, in support of the new environmental management model. • Implement information technology (IT) initiatives to support the new environmental management model such as: ~ implementing the application processing and permissions management system; ~ starting work to establish an overall Environmental Information Management System; and ~ starting work to establish and upgrade systems for managing the compliance assurance mandate within the Ministry's results-based regulatory business model.

Strategy	Key 2011-12 Actions
Manage sustainable use of natural resources to increase economic benefits	• Lead land use planning to inform development and resource allocation decisions that are supported by diverse stakeholders and user groups by: ~ initiating development of an implementation plan for the Regional Environmental Study of the Great Sand Hills; ~ initiating the final review of the Pinehouse Dipper and Fort a la Corne land use plans; ~ submitting the Buffalo Pound land use plan for review and approval; and ~ ongoing implementation of the Pasquia Porcupine, Amisk/Atik, La Ronge, Misinipiy, Prince Albert Model Forest, Manitou Sand Hills and Nisbet land use plans. • Facilitate land acquisition by Treaty Land Entitlement First Nations. • Continue to identify, protect and manage sites within the provincial Representative Areas Network. • Continue to develop and implement a risk-based, provincial Compliance Plan that supports the results-based regulatory framework and focuses compliance assurance and monitoring on areas of highest priority within the Ministry mandate. • Enhance the facilitation of orderly and sustainable industry growth in the oil/gas/mineral exploration sectors by on-line permitting, conducting environmental reviews and approving surface access to mineral and petroleum projects where appropriate. • Support forest industry revitalization by: ~ protecting the commercial forest from insects and diseases; ~ ensuring renewal of harvested areas within the provincial forests; ~ encouraging a more efficient licensing structure and increased partnerships within the Independent Operator sector associated with the Prince Albert Forest Management Agreement during the allocation of additional wood volumes; ~ working with Energy and Resources to license the wood supply to facilitate redevelopment of the Prince Albert Pulp Mill; and ~ continuing to support the development of an industry that produces biomass energy from wood by assisting proponents in the analysis of feedstock quality and quantity. • Support natural resource based tourism by implementing an automated hunting and fishing license system.

Government Goal – Security

Secure Saskatchewan as a safe place to live and raise a family where people are confident in their future, ensuring the people of Saskatchewan benefit from the growing economy.

Strategy	Key 2011-12 Actions
Prevent and reduce risks to the health of people and the environment	• Continue the aerial fleet renewal plan and remaining infrastructure projects. • Work with local governments, northern residents and stakeholders and provide education and support to enable them to understand, and take responsibility to protect themselves from, the risks of wildfires. • Work with the federal and other provincial and territorial governments on advancing air quality management across the nation through the new National Air Quality Management System. • Implement the Province's airshed management program in conjunction with the new national Airshed and Air Zone Management program by: ~ working to establish the Saskatoon-Lloydminster Airzone monitoring network. • Work with communities and applicable industries to ensure safe drinking water; water and wastewater infrastructure capacity and capability; and the maintenance of drinking water quality standards by: ~ monitoring and following-up on drinking water quality testing results to ensure compliance with standards; ~ working with affected communities to ensure the assessment of wastewater effluent is conducted in a timely manner; ~ working with ministries and agencies to advance water and wastewater related infrastructure planning and improvements; and ~ working with waterworks owners to evaluate waterworks infrastructure through the second round of waterworks system assessments. • Encourage the development or use of regional water or wastewater infrastructure to make more effective use of funding. • Work with communities to achieve proper water quality standards, including trace element, biological, radiological and pesticide related water as stated in *The Water Regulations*. • Continue safe drinking water related programming delivery including water and wastewater system inspections; reviewing waterworks related projects; and responding to drinking water related emergencies which may pose a threat to public health. • Expand solid waste management and recycling programs by implementing the provincial strategy for municipal solid waste management and Multi-Material Recycling Program. • Work with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to research and develop innovative solutions to packaging of goods. • Develop and implement a scientifically credible and defensible program to monitor and manage cumulative environmental impacts.

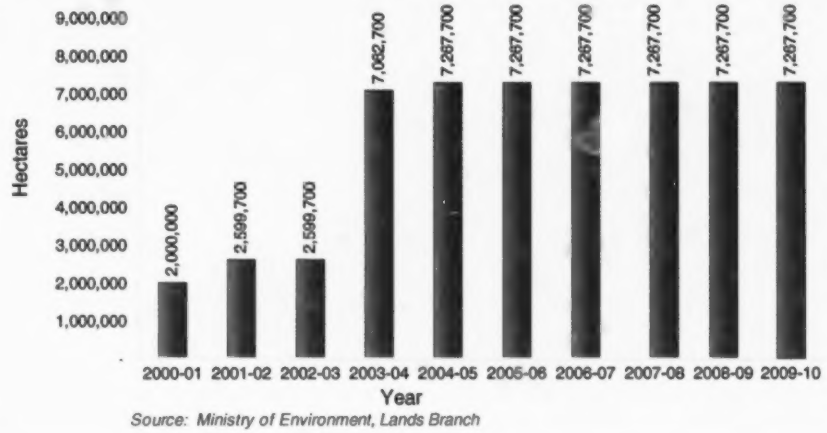
Strategy	Key 2011-12 Actions
Maintain healthy air, land, water and ecosystems that support native biological diversity	• Monitor the new provincial fisheries management plan to ensure sustainable use of resources. • Implement a new acid deposition management framework to manage the impacts of acid deposition. • Oversee clean-up of priority contaminated sites by: ~ continuing to evaluate contaminated sites as they are identified; and ~ monitoring progress at facilities undergoing remediation including sites in Kamsack, River Landing and Magnum Oil. • Continue to monitor non-uranium abandoned mine sites to identify and minimize or eliminate public safety hazards. • Develop and implement a new Biodiversity Action Plan framework that builds on the existing plans and programs, fills the gap from previous plans, and re-engages government partners and external stakeholders. • Develop a framework for regulation, development and allocation of Saskatchewan's water resources that supports focused, comprehensive and strategic management of water and water-related activity. • Work with stakeholders and partners to develop a Boreal Water Management Strategy.
Lead the government's response to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change	• Implement the policy and regulatory framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from large emitters and non-regulated sectors to deliver the provincial climate change plan. • Design and implement the provincial offset system to enable regulated emitters to meet a portion of their compliance obligations and encourage non-regulated emitters to reduce emissions through performance agreements. • Implement a provincial adaptation blueprint in partnership with other ministries, industry groups and communities to address potential long-term impacts of climate change.
Support the delivery of the Province's Go Green Plan	• Administer the Go Green Fund to promote research and development of cost-effective environmental technologies and processes that support the following objectives: ~ reduction or avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions; ~ conservation of water supplies; ~ biodiversity conservation; ~ reduction of waste; and ~ public education and awareness.

Government Goal – Promises

Keep Government's **Promises** and fulfill the commitments of the election, operating with integrity and transparency, accountable to the people of Saskatchewan.

Strategy	Key 2011-12 Actions
Enhance co-operation among intergovernmental agencies in environmental and resource management	• Minimize duplication and maximize federal/provincial co-operation to ensure the environment is protected by continuing effective agreements with agencies and by entering into new agreements such as: ~ seeking to maximize regulatory cooperation regarding uranium mining and milling in Saskatchewan through a modernized Memorandum of Understanding with Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC); ~ continuing discussions with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to complete and implement a Canada-Saskatchewan Fish Habitat Memorandum of Understanding to clarify respective roles and responsibilities to avoid duplication in managing applications, streamlining the approval processes, and enhance sharing of information; and ~ participate in the review of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* in order to minimize overlap and duplication in the environmental assessment process.
Fulfill the duty to consult and work co-operatively with and increase involvement of First Nations and Métis people in environmental and resource management	• Develop a ministerial framework that facilitates the implementation of duty to consult, supports partnerships and relationships with First Nations and Métis people and communities, and respects rights of First Nations and Métis, including: ~ identifying strategic cross-ministry opportunities for capacity-development for First Nations and Métis; ~ developing branch-specific directives for effective implementation of the consultation framework; and ~ developing a First Nations and Métis Awareness Learning Program to support Ministry staff in the implementation of the duty to consult and build cooperative relationships with First Nations and Métis.
Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Ministry's programs and services so as to ensure the best use of public funds	• Enhance a client-focused culture that supports high quality service. • Implement a human resource plan to align the Ministry's workforce, culture and succession management to support the transition to results-based regulation. • Continue to implement a management practice of assessment and continuous improvement to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Performance Measures

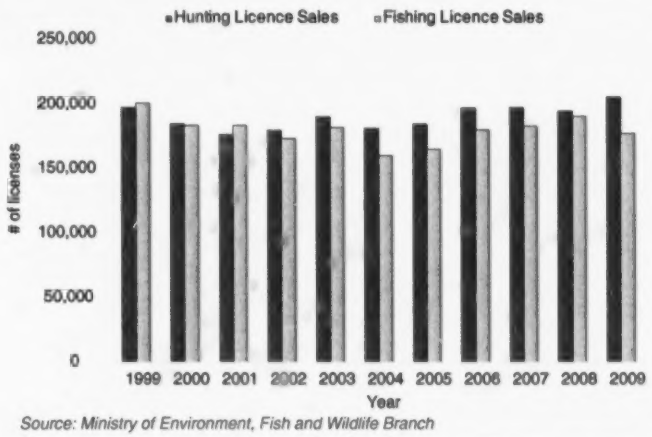
Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information
Number of hectares of Crown land under integrated land use plans (ILUP)	

Source: Ministry of Environment, Lands Branch

Measure Description

Integrated land use planning is an ecosystem-based tool that links the environment, the community and the economy in ways that help ensure the sustainability of resources. The completion of plans enables the Ministry to manage the subject land area with certainty as to acceptable activities and levels of protection and conservation. This measure aligns with the Ministry's strategy to manage sustainable use of natural resources to increase economic benefits. The unification of the varied interests through the planning process requires time, commitment, a high-level of participation, and financial resources but results in a more efficient, supported resource management decision-making over the long-term. Any influences that adversely affect any of these four components will result in at least a degree of loss of control or influence over the measure.

The total area of Crown land under integrated land use plans has remained at 7,267,700 hectares since 2004-05. While no new plans were approved in recent years, advances have been made in land use planning processes. There are more than 7 million additional hectares of Crown land involved in active land use planning processes and, over the next several years, the Ministry is targeting completion of these key integrated land use plans. As these land use plans are completed, the number of hectares under integrated land use plans will increase

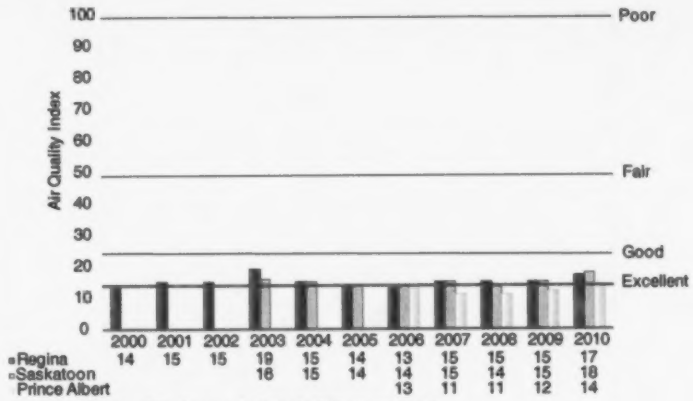
Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information
Number of hunting and angling licences sold	

Source: Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Branch

Measure Description

Hunting and angling are of social, cultural and economic importance in the province. Licence sales are tracked annually and serve both as an indicator of short and long-term interest in these activities and as an indication of the importance of hunting and fishing to the economic health of the province. Measuring the number of licences sold helps to determine the priority areas for population assessments and to manage competing interests of users. As such, this measure aligns with the Ministry's strategy to manage sustainable use of natural resources to increase economic benefits.

The Ministry has experienced high levels of participation in angling and hunting activities by members of the public over the last number of years which supports continued focus on wildlife and fisheries resources conservation and management.

Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information
Air Quality Index	

Source: Ministry of Environment, Technical Resources Unit
(also available online at www.environment.gov.sk.ca/airqualityindex)

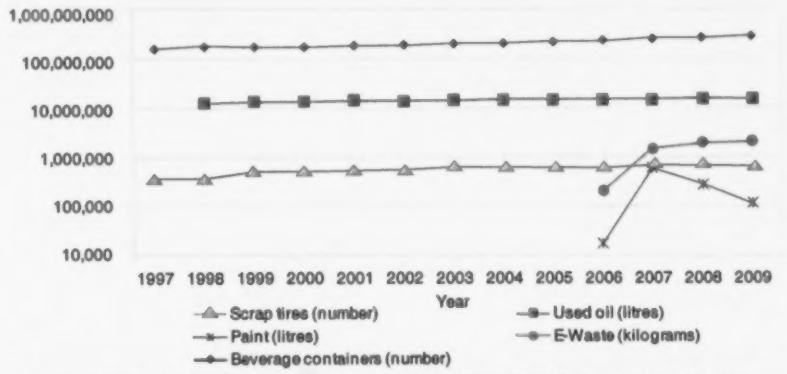
Measure Description

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a communication tool designed to describe the general air quality in urban areas by transforming ambient measurements of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide and particulates into a single number or descriptive term that represents the measured quality of the air. The index is also used to monitor long-term trends in air quality. Measuring and evaluating urban air quality is an important step in meeting the Ministry's objective of ensuring clean air. Maintaining air quality is fully aligned with the Ministry's strategy to prevent and reduce risks to the health of people and the environment. This measure is an essential tool to monitor air quality trends and a basis for making rough comparisons of air quality in different urban areas.

Saskatchewan's overall approach to managing air quality is through permits to operate issued pursuant to Saskatchewan's *Clean Air Act/Regulations* and *The Potash Refining Air Emissions Regulations*, the environmental assessment process, air quality monitoring, reporting, ambient air quality standards, air dispersion modeling, airshed management, compliance and enforcement, information and research.

The Ministry of Environment has established air monitoring stations in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, La Loche and Swift Current. The AQI index for Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and La Loche has consistently rated as good to excellent and there has been a relatively stable trend in this measure (the AQI for Swift Current will be assessed once sufficient data is available). Forest fire smoke from fires in British Colombia caused very poor air quality for about a day and a half in August 2010 for most of the province which caused the overall annual index to be slightly higher than usual.

The graph above provides the AQI for those stations that are a part of the National Air Pollution Surveillance Program; however, data for all sites is available on the website listed above. The Ministry intends to continue using the AQI to rank the province's air quality so as not to jeopardize the health of people and the environment from potential degraded air quality.

Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information
Recycling Rates	

Sources: Third Party Organizations Annual Reports, Saskatchewan Waste Electronic Equipment Program
Notes: Beverage containers, paint and e-waste are based on a fiscal year. The fiscal year 2008-09 is represented by 2009. All other data is based on calendar year. E-waste program began February 1, 2007.

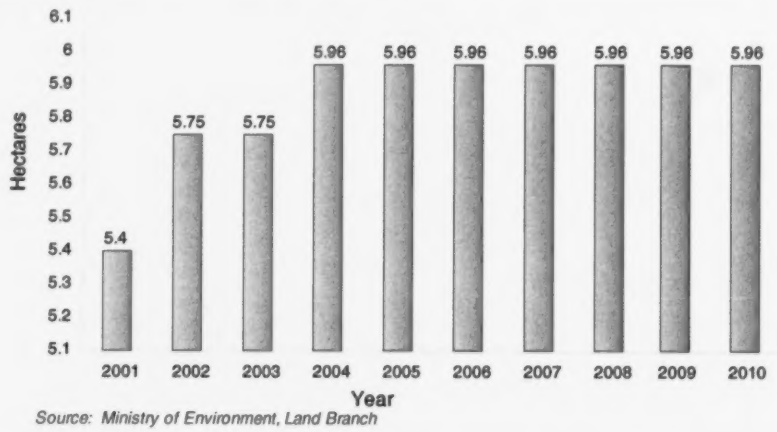
Measure Description

Recycling is an indicator of public commitment to waste minimization and indicates shared responsibility for environmental stewardship. The Ministry administers the enabling regulations for a number of third party stewardship programs. The recycling indicators report on the actions of the Ministry of Environment in addressing strategies of preventing and reducing risks to the health of people and the environment and key actions related to expanding solid waste management and recycling programs. Any limitations on the data are related to reporting accuracy of stewardship organizations which operate the recycling programs.

Market conditions and public commitment determine the recycling rates; however, in general the indicator shows that Saskatchewan benefits from good recycling rates and practices. Over 85 per cent of all deposit paid ready to serve beverage containers sold in Saskatchewan are recycled, which makes this the highest return rate of all beverage container programs in Canada. The Ministry continues to promote recycling within the province as a means to increase the recycling rates. The expansion of waste electronic products eligible for collection and recycling through the Saskatchewan Waste Electronic Equipment Regulations as well as the Ministry's efforts to develop a Multi-Material Recycling Program are expected to increase recycling rates in the future.

With the exception of waste paint, recycling rates increased slightly based on the number or volume of material recycled. Saskatchewan's Beverage Container Collection and Recycling Program has shown a 7.45 per cent increase (24,323,607 additional beverage containers) in 2009-10 compared with 2008-09. This is the second year in succession with approximately 7.5 per cent increase in the number of beverage containers which have been recycled.

The decline in the number of litres of waste paint collected and recycled through the Saskatchewan Paint Stewardship Program can be attributed to the decrease in the amount of waste or unwanted paint that the public has remaining in storage. In 2009, 109,900 litres of paint were collected or exchanged. Also in 2009, approximately 705,000 scrap tires and slightly over 17 million litres of used oil were collected.

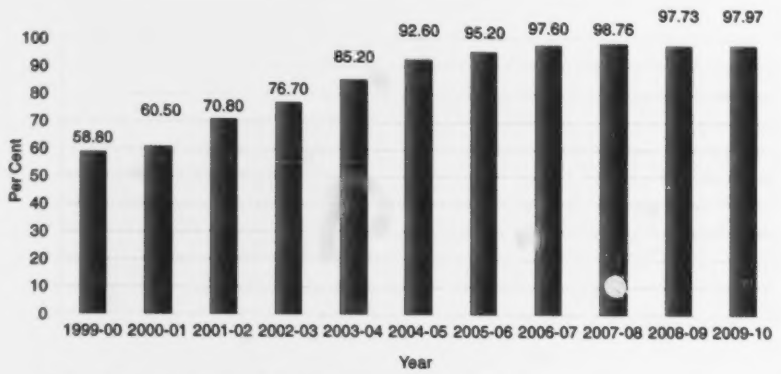
Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information
Number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network (RAN)	

Source: Ministry of Environment, Land Branch

Measure Description

The Representative Areas Network is intended to conserve representative and unique landscapes throughout the 11 ecoregions of the province. The RAN includes designated Crown lands that have been given a level of protection by virtue of legislation and private lands that are managed for biodiversity by agreement. The measure of the number of hectares in the RAN is an indicator of the province's commitment to supporting the protection and retention of native habitat and of long-term ecological health and aligns with the strategy of managing sustainable use of natural resources to increase economic benefits. Establishing protected areas is seen in the international science community as a 'natural solution' and a powerful tool against carbon emissions and possibly climate change. There are challenges in adding significant number of hectares to the RAN. In agricultural portions of the province, the vast majority of land is privately held and additions to the RAN are achieved in small quantities while, in northern Saskatchewan, even though Crown land dominates, many interests must be considered and weighed to achieve a balance between conservation and economic development.

The number of hectares in the Representative Areas Network remains unchanged with no new areas being added to the network; however, a number of sites have been identified within integrated land use plans and, as these land use plans are approved and recommendations for designation of proposed representative areas are implemented, hectares will be added.

Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information
Drinking Water Quality Standards Compliance	

Source: Ministry of Environment, Municipal Branch; SEEMS Database

Measure Description

The drinking water quality compliance indicator is an average of compliance with disinfection and bacteriological standards, both of which measure compliance with drinking water quality standards. This indicator looks at both the results of bacteriological water quality monitoring and the level of disinfectant present in drinking water and is a good predictor of the safety of drinking water. Compliance with drinking water quality standards for disinfection and bacteriological quality is important as contamination in water supplies can result in significant illness within a short period of time and proper disinfection of drinking water is an important way to ensure safe drinking water and prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases. The indicator reports on the actions of the Ministry in addressing the strategy to prevent and reduce risks to the health of people and the environment and key actions related to ensuring safe and sustainable drinking water. The accuracy of this indicator is fully dependant on accurate testing and reporting by regulated waterworks operators.

The drinking water quality compliance indicator has been very good for the past few years and has remained relatively stable. The Ministry will continue to reinforce the need to comply with disinfection requirements and proper reporting of disinfection values in 2011-12 and beyond to ensure increased awareness. Ongoing inspection and education awareness initiatives with waterworks owners and operators are planned to sustain good performance in achieving water that is safe from bacteriological threats and meets disinfection standards.

Measure	Baseline / Trend Line Information

Drinking Water Quality Satisfaction

December 2001	May 2003	March 2005	March 2006	May 2007	February 2008	May 2009	March 2010
72%	87%	86%	87%	83%	87%	90%	88.7%

Source: Ministry of Environment Polling Results

Measure Description

The Drinking Water Quality Satisfaction indicator is based on the results of annual polling of Saskatchewan residents on their level of confidence in the quality of their drinking water supply. The measure is actually the per cent of survey respondents indicating that they are very or somewhat confident in the quality of their tap water. This indicator reflects upon the success of the Ministry in advancing safe drinking water at various public drinking water supplies (municipalities, pipelines, large commercial water systems) across the province. The indicator reports on the actions of the Ministry in addressing strategies of preventing and reducing risks to the health of people and the environment and key actions related to ensuring safe and sustainable drinking water. The accuracy of the indicator is limited only by the accuracy of polling methods.

The drinking water quality satisfaction indicator has been greater than 80 per cent since 2003. The slight change from 2009 to 2010 is not easily explained but has been recognized by the Ministry and the results for 2011 will be closely monitored. Ongoing attention to actions such as consumer education efforts, waterworks inspections, implementation of water quality standards, water workshops and consumer notification will help to maintain a high level of public confidence in the safety of drinking water in the future.